



The Link ++

The newsletter for the Methodist Church in
Burnham-on-Sea and the surrounding area

December 2025 to January 2026

Christmas and New Year



A Message from our Minister

The Methodist Christmas theme this year is 'The Gift'. It encourages us to recognise the gifts we have from God and how we can be God given gifts to others.

Perhaps one of the ways is to help people who are lonely and isolated. When homes and streets are decorated with Christmas trees and lights are all over buildings, people get together. They have family and friends on their minds, ones far away and ones they will be preparing to meet and celebrate with, exchange gifts with, and share life together. But, what about those who do not have families to go to, because of their individual circumstances, often circumstances beyond their control? Age UK have warned that there will be many isolated, on their own, this Christmas in the UK. And overseas we see similar isolation made worse by geography, distances involved, lack of finance and transport. What can our response be?

For those overseas - one of the many good things happening in Burnham this year was the packaging and dedication of Christmas presents in shoe boxes. Gifts of love to those we don't know, but who we know are in some way in need. We could donate to overseas charities like All We Can

For those close to home - perhaps there are friends and neighbours around us that, if we have room, we can give the gift of company and friendship this Christmas time, and even to share the joy of opening gifts. We could lay an extra place at the table on Christmas Day.

Christmas is primarily a time to reflect on God, to remember that God became part of humanity, and share with us the gift of Jesus. May we understand what it means to be a gifted part of God's family.

May you receive the gift of Christmas again this year.

Steve

BREAN

www.breanmethodistchurch.org.uk



We were all sat round the table having coffee after the service when Rose piped up with 'So what shall we do about it this year?' The answer was SILENCE waiting for the first one to speak. The subject of course. was to be about Christmas and the topic, surely, was to be about Food. On the second Sunday of December each year, were we not only to host and enjoy our December joint service with our friends from St Bridgets, but were also have lunch together afterwards.

Well, we quickly decided that, though we have had a Bring and Share lunch in the warmer months (Harvest for example), Christmas calls for warm food and a bit more planning. So breast of traditional turkey was settled upon and, at Anne's suggestion, cooked ham was added to the menu. Who to cook the turkey and ham, and in turn the other ingredients (roast potatoes, brussels and other vegetables, stuffing, gravy etc.), soon found volunteers for preparation and timings arranged so that everything arrives at the right moment. And then who is coming. Our own people and their family members could be more easily identified, and St Bridgets will provide a few more there. There will also be up to half a dozen of our summer visitors come down for the occasion; it will be great to catch up with them too. We could cope with a few more perhaps, but we need to know final numbers by the week before i.e. 7th December, in order to order enough food for us all.

We went on to discuss Christmas cards. In recent years we have abandoned having our Christmas cards to each other delivered. Instead we have a single card for us to sign and then we make a contribution for All We Can. I guess that many of you do something similar. So far this year our donations have raised £100 or so. We decided that our contributions should seek to aid beekeeping and chicken rearing in Uganda, water provision and better schooling in Sierra Leone, and sewing in Liberia. Thank you to all those who have contributed.

Preparations for our informal carol service on Christmas Eve and the Coffee and Carols morning on the Saturday beforehand, were also in our minds. We hope we shall bring

new ideas for making our informal Christmas Eve carol service go well. John is co ordinating things again this year so it should be splendid. We hope you will all come, The half hour or so of fellowship after Sunday service where we all sit round the same large table (squeeze round would be a better description in the summer months perhaps), becomes a happy time for us all, and there is always a bit of laughter tangled up within the more serious chat.

We are sad that Celia is having to move away from us in order to worship regularly. She has given so many years of support to us at Brean and we shall miss her very much, but she is caught up in those twin problems of age and getting about in rural areas. She feels that, for health reasons, it is now time to give up driving, but she can't get here by bus because in the winter there just aren't any of them on our roads on Sundays.

We were upset to learn of the death of Dorothy May. For several decades she and Cedric had run the Jewellers and Watchmakers along College Street that Cedric's father had set up. Judy and I had contact with her very soon after we arrived in the Circuit, 50 years ago when she and Cedric, Harry and Hazel Kempson and Les and Jackie Jenkin invited Judy to join the Badminton Club they ran in the schoolroom at Burnham Chapel. Great fun they all had. We pray for her and send condolences to Cedric, Nigel and the rest of the family.

So Christmas is here again. A quiet build up during Advent and then it all breaks forth as we joyfully but also with quiet thoughtfulness, take part in all that brings us together at this time.

So, a very happy Christmas from us all, and our prayerful wish for a peaceful New Year to everyone. Harvey

BRENT

www.eastbrentmethodistchurch.org.uk

Brent Church at East Brent



Having had 2 missives from us last month, you are getting only one this month, I think!

It will only be a short one. Remembrance Sunday was not blessed with the best of weather but the Act of Remembrance, led by Steve, at the War Memorial was well attended and we welcomed a good number of people back to our hall for coffee and a chat afterwards. No police in attendance, this year, but 2 brave ladies, in very high vis jackets, stepped out at the appropriate time and the traffic came to a standstill – those few moments of quiet were appreciated by all at the memorial, thank you, ladies.

I happened to be in Tesco, on the morning of the 11th, when the whole store went quiet for the 11 o'clock act of remembrance. The whole store, that is, apart from one toddler who's chatter reminded me, perhaps as little else could, that we were remembering all those who fought and died so that our youngsters could grow up without the fear of war and bombs falling around them. Let us hope and pray that our freedom and peace will continue and pray for peace in all those countries around the world where war and fighting continue.

6th December and our Christmas Fayre are fast approaching. Carols by Candlelight 19th December, 7 pm. Details of all our services can be found on a separate page.

Best wishes to you all for a Blessed Christmas

Margaret

BURNHAM

<http://www.methodistchurchburnhamonsea.org.uk/>



Good news from Burnham!

It's a busy time of year! It's an enriching time of year!

During November we were pleased to host a service of Remembrance, led by Rev Steve. It provided an opportunity to cherish the memory of people important to us whose earthly life has ended. As each name was mentioned, there was a pause and a candle was lit in remembrance.

Christmas can be especially difficult for people recently bereaved. On Wednesday 3rd December, a 'Light up a life' service is to be held in Burnham, led by Rev Karen Murphy from Weston Hospice.

Our Christmas Fair brought enrichment of a different kind. Fun and laughter abounded throughout the premises as we joined with the Friends of Burnham hospital. Our church raised almost £1,500 for its funds, while the Friends raised a significant sum too.

On Saturday 20th December, 10:30 a.m. we welcome the 'Serendipity Singers' who will initiate a weekend of festive songs. All are invited to join them at coffee time for a performance lasting approximately 45 minutes.

Sunday 21st 6 p.m. brings our traditional carol service, which includes many much-loved carols.

However, our most important 'Good news' of all is that in different ways we are celebrating God's amazing gift to us: the birth of Jesus Christ.

In whatever way you spend Christmas Day, all at Burnham wish you a blessed and peaceful Christmas.

Linda Patient [on behalf of the stewards].

WEST HUNTSPILL

www.wsmbos.org/westhuntspill.htm



Our Carol Service is to be on Monday 22nd December at 7.00pm. Followed by refreshments.

Coffee and Chat for December will be on Friday the 2nd January. Do come along and join us, we enjoy meeting up with our friends from the Link Churches. We won't be having a sales table for this coffee morning. But any donations will be for "All We Can"

Then our normal coffee morning will be on the last Friday in January which is the 30th. Any donations then will be for "The Somerset and Dorset Air Ambulance" The time for both Coffee Mornings is 10.30am – 12 noon.

On Christmas Day, we here at West Huntspill have been gathering for a number of years, for a light breakfast together which commences at 8.45am followed by a Worship Service at 9.30am led by Rev. Steve. If any one from our Link Churches would like to join with us, you will be very welcome. Either for breakfast or the Service.

We at West Huntspill wish you all a very Happy and Blessed Christmas and a Healthy and Peaceful 2026.

I heard the following story a few weeks ago and believe it is worth repeating here. There is power in praying together. Back in the 19th Century a Missionary home from Africa was going to various Churches to which he was invited. To tell of the work in Africa and of the need for more Missionaries. He was invited to a church in Scotland and when he arrived the congregation was comprised of older people who he felt would not be able to put them selves forward. But he decided to give the message that he had prepared any way and at the end although he was doubtful in his heart, he went ahead and bid anyone there to go to Africa. Well, someone stood up and it was a young boy who had been pumping the Organ. He said I will go. That young boy was David Livingstone. He was advised at the time to train as a doctor in order that he could go out as a Medical Missionary, so he did and eventually travelled to Africa.

He was there sometime and was endeavoring to bring the message of the

Gospel to a Tribe a short distance away from the compound where David and his company lodged, they received a message from the Tribal Chief to say that they were going to come on a certain day and kill them all. Well, nothing happened on that night, some time later the Chief and his tribe were all converted, David asked the Chief why he had not come on that specific night. He replied that they had come but they found 39 Giants parading around the compound, so they went home.

Some time after this David returned to England on Furlough and went to his home Church and spoke to them and told them this story of their deliverance. After the service one of the leaders asked David the date this happened. He then picks up a book and looked up the fact that on that night 39 men were in church praying for David Livingstone. Prayer changes things.

J.Johnson

REINDEER REPORT

(How the reindeer saw their annual flight across the skies)



Chimneys: colder.
Flight paths: busier.
Driver: Christmas (F)
Still; baffled by postcodes.
Children: more
And stay up later.
Presents: heavier.
Pay: frozen
Mission (in spite
Of all this):
Accomplished.

A poem by U A Fanthorpe; and going back to that first Christmas, this is how the poet envisaged the scene

BC:AD

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect
Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven

Brent Christmas Dates



At East Brent

Christmas Fayre and Concert

Saturday 6th December 11am – 1.30 pm

Friday 19th December 7pm

Carols by Candlelight followed by mince pies and coffee

Thursday 25th December, Christmas Day, 10 am

Short Family Service

Sunday 28th December 10.30 am

Morning worship at East Brent

Sunday 4th January 2026

10.30 am Covenant Service at Brean

Brean Christmas Dates



Coffee and Carols

Saturday 20th December

10.30 am

Christmas Eve Carol Service

4pm

Followed by refreshments

We hope you will join us for these Christmas celebrations

BOOKS AND FILMS



Over the last three or four years, Judy and I have been going to the Wells Literary Festival held in the last week of October. There are numerous events covering a wide range of interests and normally supporting a book recently published. This year one of our choices was for a session based on a book by Lamorna Ash. We knew nothing of her but she was to be interviewed by the retired Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and that was the real attraction. I bought her book and read it beforehand. It is called *Don't forget We're Here for Ever*.

She is a young woman with a conventional background but reflecting the partying culture of much of today's youth. But when a couple of her friends got converted and found themselves attracted to Christian ministry, she was so shocked she felt drawn to try to understand why. So she spent a year or so on an adventure to meet with others living in a wide range of Christian experiences. Her journeys took her into Evangelical Festivals, sects, mainstream and even Quakers, and on the way exploring her own faith cycle and spirituality. Along the way she wrote up stories of abused people and of abusers too. A beautifully written book that I enjoyed, though Judy less so. However, we both got a lot out of the interview at Wells. Ash and Williams both treated each other with respect and as equals and the occasion benefitted by that.

One of my least favourite musical works is Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, some beautiful music but I cannot abide the theology behind it, I cannot accept the suggestion of people being consigned to Purgatory as a way of purging their earthly sins before they are accepted into heaven. I cannot accept that a loving God would allow that.

Last month, we went over to Norfolk (Judy's home county) to visit her brother, now living at Cromer. He and his lady friend took us to the cinema to see a film called *The Choral*. It is set in 1916 and the Choral society are striving to prepare for an upcoming concert while the young men are being called up for War time service, When one of the leading lights returns without his arm all sorts of questions need answering and the

choir and its individuals become embroiled in difficult, often painful, situations including that of now choosing The Dream for their subject, of editing it to suit their resources and even of wondering what the composer would make of their actions.

A wonderful film, I thought, even allowing for my reservations about the theme of the musical work.

I see a parallel between these portrayals, both book and film. They identify a journey to be worked through in people's lives, often with uncertainty, terror and loneliness. A journey for each one of us to complete by ourselves and with group of others. Choices to be made, and often the choices, we know, will take us through unpleasant experiences. As a Christian, I was much moved by both.

Harvey Allen

THE LINK FELLOWSHIP

Revd. Judith Lincoln was our speaker at the Link Fellowship in November when she shared some of her experiences of the long distance walks she had taken while on her recent sabbatical. She brought handouts with pictures of some of the places she had visited along the way,

As the meeting fell on November 11th — Remembrance day — this was reflected in our opening devotions.

We shall next meet on Tuesday December 9th when we shall share a meal together which Christine Thomas has most ably organised. This will start at noon and finish at about 2.30p.m to avoid the darker afternoons. After sharing the meal we shall continue with a selection of carols, readings and poems concluding with tea & mince pies.

Our January meeting will be on Tuesday January 13th at 2.30p.m. and will take the form of a quiz afternoon. All are welcome to join us, but in the meantime, on behalf of our group, may I wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

Joyce Pipet

STATIONING – THE CURRENT SITUATION

We were not successful in acquiring a match to replace Steve when he leaves us next summer.

We are glad for those circuits across our Connexion who have found a possible replacement and pray for a successful conclusion to their conversation.

Meanwhile we wish our stewards well as they continue their search and hope that the next Matching Meeting, will be more successful for us.

DIARY DATES

Regular days	Time	Location	Event
Monday (except Bank Holidays)	10.30am	Brean	Coffee morning
Thursday	11.00am	Zoom	Coffee chat (Details from Steve)
Monday to Thursday	9.00am to 2.00pm Wednesday to 4pm	Burnham	Waffle Hub Community Cafe and associated activities
Wednesday	2.00pm	Burnham	Knit 'n' natter
Friday	Morning	Burnham	Mothers and toddlers
Other Dates			
2 nd December	7.30pm	Burnham	Circuit Meeting
3 rd December	7.00pm	Burnham	Weston Hospice 'Light up a Life' service
6 th December	11.00am to 1.30pm	(East) Brent	Christmas Fayre and Concert
9 th December	2.30pm	(East) Brent	Link Fellowship
19 th December	7.00pm	(East) Brent	Carol Service followed by coffee and mince pies
20 th December	10.30am	Brean	Coffee and Carols (and chat)
20 th December	10.30am	Burnham	Serendipity Singers. Start of week-end of festive songs.
21 st December	6.00pm	Burnham	Traditional Carol Service
22 nd December	7.00pm	West Huntspill	Carol Service and refreshments
24 th December	4.00pm	Brean	(Informal) Carol Service (Tea and cake to follow)
25 th December	10.00am	(East) Brent	Short family service
25 th December	8.45am	West Huntspill	Light breakfast followed by Worship Service at 9.30am
2 nd January	Morning	West Huntspill	Coffee and chat
13 th January	2.30pm	(East) Brent	Link Fellowship

Link Plus+++ is issued on or around 1st of each month except for January and August. Members of our congregations are encouraged to receive a copy each month. Register your interest by sending your email to our minister, Steve, on:

steve.bennett@methodist.org.uk

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue. It is much appreciated and I hope that you and others will continue to supply articles for future editions.

My thanks also to Anne Hicks who kindly added the graphics to make this Christmas Edition of 'The Link'

The closing date for items in the next edition of Link Plus is 25th January

Harvey

Christmas Bells

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And in despair I bowed my head;
“There is no peace on earth,” I said;
“For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”

A very Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year to everyone.